

## Influence of Leadership Styles of Middle Level Managers on Employee Talent Development at Rongo University, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Middle level managers play a very vital role in employee talent development in institutions of higher learning since they manage a large population of employees at this level. Talent development seems to be the key theme driving the educational institutions. The study sought to investigate the influence of leadership styles of middle level managers on employee talent development at Rongo University. Descriptive research design was used for the study because it allowed for the statistical analysis of data to describe the trends about responses to questions and to test research questions. The study targeted 10 senior management level staff, 8 Deans, 30 middle level managers of departments and sections, 80 middle level employees, 100 low level management employees. Simple random sampling was used on middle and low level employees from different sections and departments. 10 senior management level staff, 8 Deans, 30 middle level managers of departments was sampled using purposive sampling method. Reliability was ensured through test-retest which yielded 0.78 Cronbach's alpha. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire is to be given to the experts and researchers of Rongo University who examined the items critically and pass on their comments to the researcher. Statistical techniques of averages and percentages with the aid of Computer Statistical Software for Social Sciences to yield descriptive results. The findings revealed that 63% of the respondents observed that stakeholders were involved in talent development in Rongo University while 37 % indicated that stakeholders were not involved. The study concluded that leadership styles of middle level managers influence employee talent development in Rongo University since effective leadership style is seen as a potent source of management development and sustained competitive advantage. The study recommended that the middle level managers in Rongo University should be trained on talent management and leadership style to apply in management of employees talents. The study adhered to ethical considerations.

**Keywords:** Leadership styles, middle-level-managers, employee, talent Kenya.

## INTRODUCTION

Talent development in the institutions of higher learning is a fundamental component. The work of Analoui [1] postulated that Educational Institutions are becoming aware of the fact that talents are perishable due to high turnover. He avers that institutions, ought to provide a suitable environment for employees' upward mobility based on entrepreneurial skills, innovativeness, and growth, a position grounded on skills as espoused by Nicholls-Nixon [2]. Thus mobility improves institutional competitive and comparative advantages as a result of access to relevant knowledge skills as espoused by Lawler [3]. However, Berger [3] holds the view that despite firms' historical growth in research and development, there are no precise mechanisms for the identification and

development of highly gifted and talent workers. Talent, according to Davis, Maggie and Neil [5] is Special aptitude, faculty, gift, high mental ability. Considering the varied characteristics as provided in this dictionary definition, it is clear that talent is a multidimensional trait that describes element of intelligence.

As a latent construct Iqbal, Anwar, and Haider [6] admits that intelligence is not measureable per se. It is recognizable via versatility and educational tests to assess the knowledge aspects in any learning discipline. Excellence in test taking may not entirely tell the degree of intelligence human resources possess because some aspects of this construct cannot be captured in intelligence tests. On the other hand, talent in the sense

of mental abilities is critical to talent development. Scholars, including Swift-Morgan [7] have maintained that talent development is a product of professional packaging of clients' abilities being dependent upon their backgrounds to uncover their degree of giftedness and enhance sustainable competitive advantage and improve service quality and pool of human capital accumulation that significantly influence the firm's product-market position. The work of Gay and Sims [8] defined talent development as the process of facilitating the progress and development and talented and skilled persons in educational institution, using formalized procedures, resources, policies, and processes". Thus, "Talent development process focuses on developing employees and leaders for the future of the educational institution" [9]. In addition, Ordonez de Pablos [10] in Spain concurs on the creation of long term sustainable competitive advantage through an efficient system of talent development that is un substitutable or unlimited by competitors [11].

Consequently, Cappelli [12] asserted that experts are concerned about the possibility of intense global competition for talents and therefore generate attention over how talent is recruited, retained, developed and managed. Furthermore, Ordonez de Pablos [10], discussed that along with the understanding of the need to hire, develop, and retain talented people, educational institutions are aware that they must manage talent as a critical resource to achieve the best possible results. While talent development focuses broadly on developing high potential employees for future leadership positions across an educational institution, current demand for talented workforce is unmet.

The scholarship interest in talent development has gained attraction in many service industries, for instance, in Sweden, a survey called the Talent Development Barometer conducted by Tidskriften Personal and Ledarskap, Sveriges HR Förening and Stardust Consulting [13] on a set of respondents comprised Human Resource managers, Human Resource professionals and line managers, revealed that 1/3 Of the total population of employees are pleased with their talents. They agree that more resources are to put in place to develop their talents more. 1/4 of the responded that they have talent development strategy which connects basic HR processes such as recruitment, on-boarding, appraisals, a common phenomenon in Europe.

Additionally, Lewis and Heckman [14] noted the absence of a system-level or a strategic framework for talent development, which early proponents of the concept envisioned. The relative summary of these scholarships asserts that the fact concerted efforts by institutions of higher learning on the significance of talent identification and development is evidently a function of differentiated demand for human resource

capabilities in order to enrich the experiences of university leadership positions. The fundamental function of institutions of higher learning is conferment of knowledge and imparting of skills across levels of education and disciplines. Educational institutions are unique in their own nature, they are purposed to research and train and nurture employees. Employees' possess various abilities, capabilities, skills and talents which should be nurtured so that they attain their full potential and the institution also attains its goal and every leader in every educational institution must perform certain roles/tasks for the smooth running of the educational institution and improvement of educational performance [15].

Studies done in West Africa by Johansson and Adams [16] and Iripa [17] explained that cases where the talents of the employees are not explored or utilized either end tragically or employees end up engaging in unlawful activities like drug abuse, other activities like absenteeism, truancy, and others cause strikes. This was why Maliehe [18] added that the manner the leader performs these roles and directs the affairs of the educational institution is referred to as his/her leadership style. The type and characteristic of the leaderships exhibited in an institution is a function that determines the success of talent development framework. Institutional leaders are the pillars necessary to anchor the vision and the mission of the department, university, and other levels of management to achieve vitality and success in the industry.

In Kenya prudent leadership has been highly esteemed. Since leadership style is the way a leader leads; according to Odhiambo [19] it is evident that some leaders are more interested in the work to be done than in the people they work with while others pay more attention to their relationship with subordinates than the job. The new phenomena in the public universities currently is how to manage the young and talented employees without stress where Yambo, Odhiambo and Odera [20] postulated that workers who join the higher institutions and universities in Kenya brings in the question of whether a leader emphasizes the task or human relations is usually considered central to leadership style. The emphasis on task and human relations are equally critical in understanding the contributions of each type of operational activities as a reflection of each position. When the objective of the leader is to realize the completion of the task, the focus will be on the processes of achieving high productivity with little attention paid to the human capital or resources. In order to understand leadership functions, it is important to discuss the different leadership styles. Since leadership embeds the institutional character, it equally represents the leanings of those who are bestowed the opportunity to serve. Autocratic leaders are class believes in do as I say [21]. Autocratic leaders are the main decision makers [22]. On the other hand, bureaucratic leaders create, and rely on, policy to meet

organizational goals. The policy dimension exhibited under bureaucratic styles drive strategy, execution, objectives and outcome. These leaders over rely on policies and strategies laid down by the organization. Those decisions follow a specific protocol with the leader at the top of the hierarchy which Ojera and Yambo [23] opined that democratic leadership has been considered as one where decision making is shared with the subordinates. The employees are given opportunity to inject new ideas without coercion from their superiors. A research by Waiganjo [24] investigated the effect of competitive strategies on the relationship between strategic human resource management and the firms' performance of Kenyan corporate organizations, for example, Ngari [25] examined the relationship between intellectual capital accounting and the business performance in the pharmaceutical firms in Kenya. Therefore, the purpose of the current study seeks to fill the existing research gap and also provide a better understanding through the empirical evidence of the role of leadership style on talent development among university employees at Rongo.

#### Statement of the Problem

While it is true that talented staff produce better results when the right leadership style is applied to boost productivity, talent shortage is being experienced. Appropriate leadership is lacking in institutions of higher learning and this impact every organization without regard to industry. This comes from the fact that the skills set possessed by available workers may not match the advanced, more complex skills required by businesses and in particular institutions of teaching. The unique natures of educational institutions are purposed to research, train and nurture employees. Consistent research has revealed that employees 'possess various abilities, capabilities, skills and talents which should be nurtured so that they attain their full potential and the institution also attains its goal. Therefore every leader in every educational institution must perform certain roles/tasks for the smooth running of the educational institution and improvement of educational performance. Institutions of higher learning put great concern on the recruitment and promotion of staff with total disregard to talent. Most leaders take less concern on an individual's capabilities for maximum production. However, developing talent is a challenge to all organizations as they compete for the same of talents. The importance of talent development therefore in Kenya is ensuring the firms are future-oriented that is to have the right skills in place to be able to grow and perform in the future that is increasingly unpredictable, but not to wait for future challenges before attempting to solve them through talent programmes. The talents of the young and energetic youth joining the workforce should be of great concern.

#### Leadership styles of Middle Level Managers on Employee Talent Development

Leadership is a complex phenomenon. Studies by Quinn [26] stated that understanding of leadership from a traditional perspective, manifested aspects of compliance, respect and cooperation. According to Goldring, Huff, May, and Camburn [27] leadership, in most cases, exercise power over the subjects to obtain cooperation based on leader's role in formulating goals, and ensuring their efficient accomplishment. On the other, scholars in Asia like Iqbal *et al.*, [6] have defined leadership as the case of interpersonal influence that get individuals or groups of people to do what the leader wants to be done. By implication, the leader's focus is on what he/she wants from people therefore, followers' input is not encouraged with regard to what it is to be done. However, studies done in America by Maxwell [28] argued that the leader's attention is on what he/she can put into people rather than what he/she can get out of them, so as to build the kind of relationship that promote and increase productivity in the educational institution. For instance, bureaucratic leadership style aim at the perceptions such as motivation, inclusion and empowerment to examine the role of followers. This style of leadership is held by Goldring *et al.*, [27] who described leadership as a process in which an individual sets direction for other people and carries them along in that direction with competence and full commitment.

Therefore, leadership is the obligation of assurance and capability; and it is suggestive of the role relationship within a social structure. In principle, a leader performs by interacting with other people within a social arrangement. Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi [29] reasoned that different views of leadership exist apart from the more traditional perspectives in fundamental ways, leadership as a personal thing, a trinity comprising one's heart, head and hand. They say that the heart of leadership deals with one's beliefs, values and vision. The head of leadership is the experiences one has accumulated over time and the ability to perceive present situations in the light of these experiences.

The work of Beyene, Gaumnitz, Goike, and Robbins [30] in America contended middle level leadership should drive for talent accumulation and development through effective leadership is a critical component of talent strategy development, articulation and eventual execution. The visibility and the active role undertaken by business leaders in the corporate world as well in academic organizations provides an understanding that their practices must be aligned with these talent strategies in order to have a direct impact on workforce engagement and performance [28]. Fundamentally, effective development within organizations begins with the recognition of employees. According to Harburg [31], this implies that they identify the employees who need development, the level of development they need and the duration during

which learning takes place. Thus, organizations with first class development initiatives harness capabilities of employees through careful and excellent listening skills in order to appreciate and understand the improvement needs of their employees which eventually are ploughed back to the organizations.

According to Gill [32] Laissez-faire leadership is based on trust. People who enjoy a wide degree of scope in making decisions and working on projects autonomously are often comfortable with Laissez-faire leaders in practice; it means leaders leave it up to their subordinates to complete responsibilities in a manner they choose without requiring strict policies or procedures. This leadership type is non-authoritarian and it tries to give people the least possible guidance. It tries to achieve control through less obvious means. They believe that people excel when left alone to respond to their responsibilities and obligations in their own. In nurturing talents, some leaders according to Wanderage [33] in Tanzania, leaders who practice Laissez-faire finds it hard to nurture talents.

Institutions of higher learning are managed based on policies and structural arrangements. The success in managing such organizations is dependent upon the type of leadership. It is critical to hire personnel with the abilities to create and who are policy wonks. Such leaders possess bureaucratic leadership style that relies on policies to meet the organizational goals. In Nigeria, Ojokuku, Odetayo, and Sajuyigbe [34], prescribed that the principle characteristic management style of the bureaucratic leader was found to allow talent development. Someone who follows a 'by the book' management philosophy is referred to as a bureaucratic leader, a style that was first developed by Max Weber in 1947. Following rules, policies and procedures meticulously is what the bureaucratic leader lives for. Still in Nigeria, Iripa [17] opined that bureaucratic leaders expect their employees to follow the normative regulations they impose because of their formal role in the organization and the authority bestowed onto them. The employees who conform to the bureaucratic leader are often rewarded. There is a strong believe in modern management that this kind of leadership slows decision making and thus advocates flattened bureaucracy.

Studies in Kenya by Ojera and Yambo [23] emphasize that democratic leadership style has been considered to be dynamic and rapidly changing environments where very little can be taken as a

constant. In the fast moving organizations, every option for improvement has to be considered to keep the group from falling out of date and nurture talents. The democratic leadership style means facilitating the conversation, encouraging people to share their ideas, and then synthesizing all the available information into the best possible decision [35]. The democratic leader must also be able to communicate that decision back to the group to bring unity the plan is chosen.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design. According to Kothari [36] descriptive survey design was used to allow the researcher to gather information, summarize, presents and interpret for the purpose of clarification. The study targeted 3 Directors, 8 Deans, 30 middle level managers of departments and sections, 80 middle level employees, 100 low level management employees. As put forward by Kombo and Tromp [37] purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents and middle level employees. In addition, this technique enabled the researcher to have an in depth study and insight on the topic being studied.

The questionnaires and interview schedules were used and administered by the researcher. According to Orodho [38], the content validity of the instrument can be determined by discussing the items in the instrument with the supervisors, lecturers from the department of Education Rongo University and colleagues. The instruments were piloted to ensure internal consistency where by 2 Directors, 2 Deans and 5 Middle level employees were selected randomly from Kisii University for piloting. Reliability was ensured through test-retest which yielded 0.78 Cronbach's alpha which Kothari [36] contends that 0.7 has been adequate enough. Data from open ended questionnaires were grouped and converted into frequency counts.

## FINDINGS

### Leadership styles of Middle Level Managers on Employee Talent Development

The study sought to answer the research question: How does leadership styles exhibit of middle level managers influence employee talent development at Rongo University?

The results presented in Table-1 whether the leadership styles of middle level managers influence employee talent development at Rongo University. The respondents gave their details as shown.

**Table-1: Employee's Talent based Management**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	144	65.00
No	77	35.00
Total	221	100.00

Information from Table-1 shows that majority 65% of the respondents indicated that Rongo University apply management of employee's based on talent whereas 35% of them indicated that Rongo University does not apply management of employee's talent based on talent. This concurred with Lyria [39] who

examined the role of talent development on organizational performance in Kenya.

#### Leadership style adopted by Rongo University

The study sought to identify the main leadership style adopted by Rongo University and their responses were as presented in Table-2.

**Table-2: Leadership style adopted by Rongo University**

leadership style	Frequency	Percentage
Democratic leadership style	72	33
Autocratic leadership style	40	18
Laissez- faire leadership style	30	14
Bureaucratic leadership style	79	35
Total	221	100

Table-2 shows that 33 % of the respondents indicated that democratic leadership style is used, 18% of them indicated that autocratic leadership style is used whereas 14 % of them indicated that laissez-faire leadership style is commonly used while 35 % indicated bureaucratic leadership style is used. McGrath and MacMillan [40] report that there is significant relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance since effective leadership style is seen as a potent source of management development and sustained competitive advantage, leadership style helps organization to achieve their current objectives more efficiently by linking job performance to valued rewards and by ensuring that employees have the resources needed to get the job done.

#### CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that leadership styles of middle level managers influence employee talent development in Rongo University since effective leadership style is seen as a potent source of management development and sustained competitive advantage; leadership style helps organization to achieve their current objectives more efficiently.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the middle level managers in Rongo University should be trained on talent management and leadership style to apply in management of employees talents, since leadership styles of middle level managers influence employee talent development.

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